

EXAMINER'S AMENDMENT

1. An examiner's amendment to the record appears below. Should the changes and/or additions be unacceptable to applicant, an amendment may be filed as provided by 37 CFR 1.312. To ensure consideration of such an amendment, it MUST be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee.

Authorization for this examiner's amendment was given in a telephone interview with Alexander Vodovozov on March 12, 2008.

The application has been amended as follows:

Please amend the title as follows: Intelligent email detection and auto reply ~~reply~~ email technique to emails destined to no reply email addresses

1. (Currently amended) A method of processing incoming emails, the method comprising:

receiving an incoming email including a no-reply destination address;

examining [[a]] the no-reply destination address of the incoming email to determine whether the no-reply destination address indicates that the incoming email is associated with a particular application;

selectively processing control information indicated by the no-reply destination address of the incoming email to determine characteristics of an auto reply email to the incoming email;

generating the auto reply email based on the determined characteristics; and
sending the generated auto reply email to a source address of the incoming email.

2. (Currently amended) The method, as recited in Claim 1, further comprising:
separating the incoming email into a plurality of parts[[:]]the plurality of parts including a control information portion; and
processing the control information of the control information portion to determine the characteristics of the auto reply email.

3. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 2, wherein the control information portion comprises a region identifier and an application identifier.

4. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 3, further comprising selecting a template for the auto reply email based on the region identifier and the application identifier.

5. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 4, wherein the template is a web page linked to a customer feedback tool.

6. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 4, wherein the template is a text message directing a customer to a customer feedback tool.

7. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 2, wherein the control information portion comprises an identifier of a sent email, wherein the incoming email is a reply to the sent email.

8. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 2, wherein the control information portion includes an auto reply email loop count.

9. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 8, further comprising comparing the auto reply email loop count to a predetermined threshold value, and selectively sending the auto reply email based on a result of the comparison.

10. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 8, wherein to determine the characteristics of the auto reply email comprises incrementing the auto reply email loop count.

11. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 2, wherein the control information portion comprises a message header, a destination address, an origination address, and an auto reply email loop count.

12. (Currently amended) The method, as recited in Claim 11, the no-reply destination address includes a sent email identifier and an application identifier.

13. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 12, wherein the application identifier identifies one of an electronic billing application, a confirm order status application, and a marketing application.

14. (Currently amended) The method, as recited in Claim 1, wherein generating the auto reply email comprises:

- separating the incoming email into a plurality of parts~~[[:]~~, the plurality of parts including a message body portion;
- processing the message body portion producing an extracted text portion;
- choosing an auto reply email template based on the control information; and
- forming the auto reply email by adding the extracted text portion to the auto reply email template.

15. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 14, wherein processing the message body portion comprises:

- converting the message body portion into the extracted text portion in response to determining that the message body portion includes an HTML portion.

16. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 15, wherein converting the message body portion comprises:

- converting the HTML portion into a text only portion;

removing blank lines from the text only portion; and
truncating the text only portion.

17. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 16, wherein the text only portion is truncated after determining that the text only portion size exceeds a predetermined limit that is determined according to a size of a web field.

18. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 14, wherein processing the message body portion comprises:

converting the message body into the extracted text portion.

19. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 14, wherein processing the message body portion comprises removing an attachment to the message body portion.

20. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 14, wherein forming the auto reply email includes placing the extracted text portion into a web field of the auto reply email template.

21. (Currently amended) The method, as recited in Claim 14, wherein the auto reply email template is a web page linked to ~~the~~ a customer feedback tool.

22. (Currently amended) The method, as recited in Claim 14, wherein the auto reply email template is a text message directing a customer to ~~the~~ a customer feedback tool.

23. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 1, further comprising determining if the incoming email is one of an out-of-office reply, a notification of an incorrect address, an unsubscribe email, and a reply containing a customer inquiry that requires a response.

24. (Currently amended) The method, as recited in Claim 1, wherein the incoming email is received in response to a broadcast email sent to a plurality of customers, the broadcast email including a no-reply from address and one or more control identifiers.

25. (Currently amended) The method, as recited in Claim 1, wherein the incoming email is received in response to an email sent to a customer, the email sent to the customer including a no-reply from address and one or more control identifiers.

26. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 1, wherein the auto reply email includes a next email form identifier from a customer feedback tool.

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27. (Currently amended) The method, as recited in Claim 1, further comprising:
separating the incoming email into a plurality of parts~~[[:]]~~, the plurality of parts
including a control information portion and a message body portion;
processing the control information of the control information portion to determine
the characteristics of the auto reply email;
processing the message body portion producing an extracted text portion;
choosing an auto reply email template based on the control information; and
forming the auto reply email by adding the extracted text portion to the auto reply
email template.

28. (Original) The method, as recited in Claim 1, wherein the auto reply email is
associated with a customer feedback tool.

29. (Currently amended) An apparatus comprising:
an auto reply email tool stored in a memory and configured to:
receive incoming emails including no-reply destination addresses;
examine the no-reply destination addresses of the incoming emails to determine
whether a no-reply destination address of an incoming email indicates that the incoming
email is associated with a particular application;
selectively process control information associated with the no-reply destination
address of the incoming email to determine characteristics of an auto reply email to the
incoming email;

generate the auto reply email based on the determined characteristics; and
send the generated auto reply email to a source address of the incoming email.

30. (Canceled).

31. (Currently amended) The apparatus, as recited in Claim 29, wherein the auto reply email tool comprises:

an email filter to examine the no-reply destination addresses of the incoming emails to determine whether a no-reply destination address of an incoming email indicates that the incoming email is associated with a particular application;

a separator configured to split the incoming email into a plurality of parts[;:]_the plurality of parts including a control information portion and a message body portion;

a message body extractor configured to process the message body portion producing an extracted text portion; and

a generator configured to choose an auto reply email template based on the control information of the control information portion, to form the auto reply email by adding the extracted text portion to the auto reply email template, and to send the formed auto reply email to a source address of the incoming email.

32. (Original) The apparatus, as recited in Claim 31, wherein the auto reply email template is a web page linked to a customer feedback tool.

33. (Original) The apparatus, as recited in Claim 31, wherein the auto reply email template is a text message directing a customer to a customer feedback tool.

34. (Currently amended) The apparatus, as recited in Claim 31, wherein the control information of the control information portion comprises a region identifier and an application identifier.

35. (Original) The apparatus, as recited in Claim 34, further comprising selecting the auto reply email template based on the region identifier and the application identifier.

36. (Currently amended) A system comprising:
an auto reply email tool stored in a memory and configured to:
receive incoming emails including no-reply destination addresses;
examine no-reply destination addresses of the incoming emails to determine whether a no-reply destination address of an incoming email indicates that the incoming email is associated with a particular application;
selectively process control information indicated by the no-reply destination address of the incoming email to determine characteristics of an auto reply email to the incoming email;

generate the auto reply email to the incoming email, the auto reply email linking a sender of the incoming email to a customer feedback tool based on the determined characteristics; and

send the generated auto reply email to a source address of the incoming email.

37. - 38. (Cancelled).

39. (Currently amended) The system, as recited in Claim 36, wherein the auto reply email tool comprises:

a separator configured to split the incoming email into a plurality of parts~~[[;]]~~the plurality of parts including a control information portion and a message body portion;

a message body extractor configured to process the message body portion producing an extracted text portion; and

a message generator configured to choose an auto reply email template based on the control information of the control information portion and to form the auto reply email by adding the extracted text portion to the auto reply email template.

40. (Currently amended) The system, as recited in Claim 39, wherein the auto reply email template is a web page linked to ~~the~~ a customer feedback tool.

41. (Currently amended) The system, as recited in Claim 39, wherein the auto reply email template is a text message directing a customer to ~~the~~ a customer feedback tool.

42. (Currently amended) The system, as recited in Claim 39, wherein the control information of the control information portion comprises a region identifier and an application identifier.

43. (Original) The system, as recited in Claim 42, further comprising selecting the auto reply email template based on the region identifier and the application identifier.

REASONS FOR ALLOWANCE

2. The following is an examiner's statement of reasons for allowance: The prior art of record does not provide for, nor suggests providing for a system for automatically replying to an email addressed to a no-reply address which includes control information. The no-reply address sends out emails to particular customers, and if they reply to this address, with the no-reply address as the destination address, the system will receive the incoming email, examine and extract control information from the no-reply destination address and, based on this control information, generate an email to reply to the incoming email and send this email. The no-reply address of the incoming email includes the control information applid.region.custtype (arlcoun)(emailid)@noreply.company.com), where the applid identifier defines the application that sent the original message, the region identifier defines the customer's region or location, the customer type identifier defines the customer's product, the arlcoun identifier defines the number of times an auto reply email has been sent, and the emailid defines the sender of the incoming email (¶ 18). This control information is used to identify a particular template to reply to the incoming email. A no-reply address is inserted into an email to those entities who do not wish to receive replies to the emails sent to customers. Most email programs encompass out-of office reply mechanisms which follow rules, however do not examine control information from within a control information portion of a no-reply address. The closest prior art would be these out-of-office reply mechanisms as explained above and Smith, however Smith does not examine control information from within a no-reply destination address as explained in

the current invention. For these reasons, in conjunction with the other limitations of the independent claims, puts this case in condition for allowance.

Any comments considered necessary by applicant must be submitted no later than the payment of the issue fee and, to avoid processing delays, should preferably accompany the issue fee. Such submissions should be clearly labeled "Comments on Statement of Reasons for Allowance."

Specification

3. The Examiner acknowledges the amendments to the specification, and are acceptable.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Joseph E. Avellino whose telephone number is (571) 272-3905. The examiner can normally be reached on Monday-Friday 7:00-4:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Nathan J. Flynn can be reached on (571) 272-1915. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

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Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Joseph E. Avellino/
Primary Examiner, Art Unit 2143